

THE SHAMAN 11

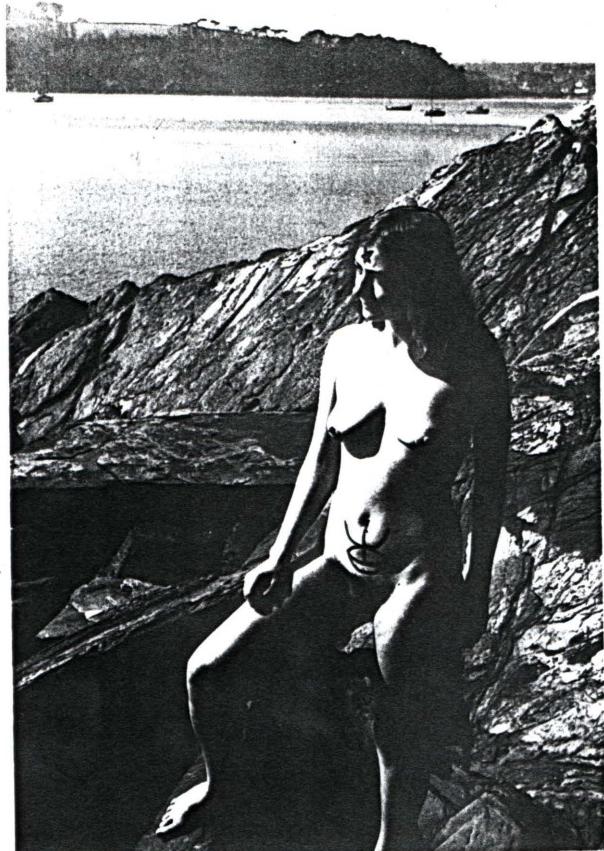


OVER: "CAIT SIDH." WITCH AND
GOAT FAMILIAR. CORNWALL,
1976.

RIGHT: WITCH "VIVIENNE".
PARSON'S BEACH,
CORNWALL, 1976.

SEE ARTICLE PAGE 2.

BELOW: HISTORIAN REGINALD
WRIGHT AT DEAD
MAN'S BANK,
BLACK HALL ROCKS.
1983.



Published 1985.

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LEAD-IN. "And human beings being what they are, we live not by our social codes, our ethics and our religions, but by our myths." -- Marion Zimmer Bradley.

Just when you thought it was safe to resubscribe ... you find The Shaman still here, Shiels, sex, et al. This has been a year of personal mixed fortunes which have affected production and much more. The promised changeover to a folkloric theme is on course. I will leave until the next issue a fuller explanation of objectives and the rough boundaries which the new-look magazine will encompass. The main thrust will be towards focussing upon urban belief tales as they appear and by so doing I hope to create a parallel to the material recorded in Fortean Times. I hope to model the magazine on Fortean Times' philosophy and approach. Thereby I wish to be inclusionistic -- collecting and commenting upon contemporary urban belief tales, relating traditional folklore to modern myths, cartographing the interface between Forteana and urban folklore, looking at the socio-psychological scenario of creation and transmission, and looking at the role and judgments of professional and amateur folklorists. There are many areas of overlapping where folklore and parapsychology merge. We will boldly go where the myths lead and hope to make sense of them. Your help, particularly with clippings and tales told socially -- as detailed as possible -- would be helpful. Monitors to Fortean Times have proved invaluable to that magazine and I would hope my readers will reciprocate similarly. Also articles contributed would help and a forum of readers' letters would be useful. Be lore-abiding citizens.

I have thought long on a title, from the accurate but dry Urban Belief Tales, New Folklorist, Foaflore, Modern Myths Times, Rumours! to the alarmist Nasty Tales Review or Tumours and Rumours and punning Long Arm of the Lore. But unless I change my mind I have settled for New Folklore Mercury. The title attempts to encapsulate the raison d'être. Its focus is new folklore, its mercurial aspects of sudden appearance, no seeming positive origin and urbanised location. Also the Mercury, with a capital M, suggests a newspaper parallel and contemporaneity and immediacy, and the magazine will attempt to be a journal of record, keeping pace with new trends in folklore.

It will retain the Ancient Skills & Wisdom Review section with books and magazines reviewed in the same spectrum of subjects as previously.

Since starting AS&WR in 1976 and through its incarnations such as The Shaman there has been no price rise. New Folklore Mercury, however, will be priced at £5 for 4 issues to reflect rises in production costs which can no longer be subsidised.

If your subscription lapses with this issue an "X" will appear in the box above. Current subscriptions are not affected.

New rates: United Kingdom £5 for 4 issues.

U.S.A. (surface) 8 dollars

U.S.A. (airmail) 12 dollars

Please make all cheques, P.O.s, money orders out to P.Screeton. Dollar notes preferred from U.S.A.

TOUCHSTONE. Modest journal of Surrey Earth Mysteries Group (which holds monthly meetings). No. 5. Surrey ice falls catalogue; Wisley Church path ley; obituary of Squadron Leader Denis Shipwright (with intriguing UFO "artifact" connection); plus letters. No. 6. Gordon Spinney obituary with tribute account of enjoyable shared ley hunt; speculation on Yateley sarsen; unusual movements in water caused by earthquakes and glowing pond. Sub. £1 for 4 issues from J. Goddard, 25 Albert Road, Addlestone, Weybridge, Surrey.

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SEX AND THE SHAMELESS SHAMAN

(Tony 'Doc' Shiels answers some rude questions
posed by Libby Dobell)

Dobell: Doc...you must be aware of the criticisms directed towards you because, for instance, of your apparent obsession with naked female flesh. How, as a so-called shaman, do you answer accusations of sexism, voyeurism, exploitation, and plain "dirty-old-man-hood"?

Shiels: Usually by making a crude noise with my tongue and lips. Sexism, meaning strongly anti-feminine or anti-masculine prejudice, is quite abhorrent and I have as little sympathy for aggressive machismo as I do fe-machismo, two sides of the same worthless coin. I'm an obsessive surrealist, making no distinction between dream and reality. I am, or try to be, a seer quite literally a voyeur.

Dobell: A dirty old man?

Shiels: Well, let's admit that I'm a middle-aged, heterosexual male, with some awareness of my own anima. I drink and smoke too much, and have lustful thoughts. Also, I quite regularly fart, belch and sweat, whilst rarely making use of a deodorant. So without regarding it as a matter of pride, I suppose I could be seen as a dirty old shaman.

Dobell: Certain followers of the Old Religion have suggested that your activities tend to degrade or trivialize their beliefs.

Shiels: "Let's be clear about one point I don't kneel in worship at the feet or cloven hooves of any god. I am pagan in a heathen, totally irreligious sense. To me, a witch or wizard, male or female, is someone who practices magic successfully ... someone who is concerned with the extraordinary, the marvellous. The beliefs of most latter-day wicca freaks don't usually seem to extend very far beyond being "into" muesli, joss-sticks and Tolkien. How the hell my activities can degrade or trivialize their beliefs I really don't know."

Dobell: But some of these people are sincerely religious.

Shiels: And I am sincerely surrealist devoutly blasphemous.

Dobell: You have regularly published photographs of naked women "sky clad" witches supposedly taking part in shamanic rituals.

Shiels: I never suggested that they were religious pictures.

Dobell: No seriously the publication of such pictures could be seen as sexually exploitative. What do you say to that?

Shiels: Seriously nudity is a natural state, it represents a freedom from repression and pretense. The shamanic shemales were conjuring up lake or sea monsters, and the ritualistic symbolism is obvious. That long ithyphallic whatsit, thrusting up through the feminine waters it's classic stuff, the beastie responding to female sexuality all the way from Andromeda to Ann Darrow. As shamans we go beyond symbolism or analogy. The monster doesn't just look or seem like an erectile penis, it is an erectile penis!

Dobell: That's ridiculous, and you're avoiding the question. We were discussing sexual exploitation.

Shiels: We are discussing sexual exploitation. Those girls were involved in a sexual exploit or deed. They were exploiting their very natural resources. Remember, a shaman is a showman ... or showperson. If pictures of that kind evoke response in the viewer, it helps to prove my point about raising things.

Dobell: That's a poor joke.

Shiels: Ah you don't dig homeopathic magic.

Dobell: You mean I don't admire vulgar innuendo?

Shiels: You're not amused by anything tasteless or indelicate. Tell me, are you ever embarrassed about feeling horny?

Dobell: I'll ask the questions.

Shiels: Fire away.

Dobell: You seem to insist on seeing some kind of sexual symbolism in all kinds of paranormal activity, from monster-raising to spoon-bending, from levitation to fire-walking.

Shiels: True, I do. I'm also attuned to the fetishistic power of objects not just obvious things like phallic standing-stones, but almost any object. Of course, I'm not alone in this, as the power of advertising constantly demonstrates. Consumer products are designed, advertised, bought and sold for fetishistic reasons. As a working surrealist, I deliberately create poetic fetish-objects erotically disturbing assemblages.

Dobell: Do you set out, deliberately, to shock?

Shiels: I try to shock myself. I try to surprise and astonish, through the manipulation of incongruous imagery and dream stuff. Some of the juxtapositions are authentically disturbing extraordinary happenings in ordinary surroundings. Instead of having to go to Loch Ness, for instance, I would much rather raise the dragon in a bowl of cock-a-leekie or a glass of Guinness..

Dobell: A galls of Guinness?

Shiels: That's extremely civil of you.

Dobell: I suppose Guinness is sexy, too?

Sheils: It is, of course. Guinness is good for you Guinness for strength. Then there was the splendid line, "Just think what Toucan do". A woman wrote that, by the way Dorothy L. Sayers.

Dobell: I don't believe it.

Shiels: It's true, all the same. You know, they used to say there was "a baby in every bottle." Have you seen the movie, about a baby brontosaurus? Maybe it means something made by Touchstone Films that could be significant, too.

Dobell: But ...

Shiels: And they made a film about a mermaid.

Dobell: What has that to do with Guinness and sex?

Shiels: It's obvious. Guinness is a famous aphrodisiac, which is why it goes so well with sea-food, like pysters. The oyster is a symbol of the womb and the pearl beyond price was the result of lightning penetrating the oyster. A brontosaurus is a thunder-lizard, but that doesn't matter. Aphrodite popped out of a mollusc shell and I think Nessie could be a mollusc.

Dobell: I give in.

Shiels: No comment.

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Doc is currently busy working on new magazine, "Nnidnid", to be excellently printed and is being described as "an occasional review of the International Surrealist Movement, with an accent on the activities of the Nnidnid gang. It should be out in the next couple of months and Doc is off to Amsterdam in September with regard to the project. He promises the inclusion of plenty of Fortean material. They are hoping for an enthusiastic response to the first issue -- and subsequent ones. The launch could be costly however Doc warns. Any inquiries or help with regard to this project I will pass on to Doc.

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IN BRIEF: Private Eye thought an E.M. contribution to a magazine by Monica Sjoo deserved lampooning in its "Wimmin" column while the August 10, 1984, issue awarded £25 to John Michell for his winning "Clerihew Corner" entry: "The Reverend Jesse Jackson / Seems to turn the blacks on / But he's not such good news / For the Jews" and in The Sun for April 25, 1985, Charles Catchpole asks pertinently: "What does the C. in Arthur C. Clarke stand for?"

REG WRIGHT AND GEORDIE KING ARTHUR

By Paul Screeton

Pensioner Reginal Wright is a composer, poet, chaser after records of rail travel and amateur historian with a mission. If you are not too choosy in knowing exactly who or what the original King Arthur and his knights were. If you are more impressed by the spirit and imaginative breadth of the Arthurian legends. Then Reg Wright's perspective will strike a responsive chord.

Popular misconception sees Arthurian unreality by way of Disney and ~~filmed~~ "Camelot". Just as the 15th century knight Malory reforged a mixed bag of Dark Ages tales in terms of his own time, the strength of Arthurian myth is so persistent as to perpetually create new forms.

Reg Wright has tracked Arthur down to his own patch and while Arthur remains a shadowy figure his presence is strongly manifested in "A History of Castle Eden Lore in search of King Arthur."

After almost a lifetime's work as an amateur local historian, Reg's enthusiasm brims over as he states that "to trace the source of such an expanding charisma as Arthur's is absorbing; to trace his legendary connections with our local villages in the County of Durham is more absorbing still." He feels "the evidence of a north-eastern Arthur is becoming more of a probability every day." This collection of folklore and speculation may not convince scholars, but certainly a Geordie King Arthur is poetically attractive for those living in the Tyne-Tees region.

Reg admits he intentionally avoided academic questions when building up his scenario from many tales of historic folklore. He acknowledges his debt to others' books on Arthurian speculation though pointing out that his approach to the material has been from different points of view. Also his perspective of the peculiar force of Arrhurian tales stems from a belief in their grounding in our Celtic/Druid heritage. They owe, he proclaims, nothing whatsoever to medieval writers.

Reg senses the significance for today and also goes out on a limb to locate much of that traditional lore, regarded by many past writers as being of such great importance that they called it The Matter of Britain, in a small tract of South-East Durham.

Reg states categorically that "for many centuries now the story of Arthur and the Knights has been associated with Castle Eden and Black Hall by far more than a medley of fireside tales." Looking into this enchantment he points to the caves at Blackhall Rocks, one known as Arthur's Cave and supposedly leading as a safety escape route; that another cave at Thornley Hall could hold hundreds of horsemen; that Castle Eden could take its name from the character in Arthurian romance Edern; and there are even parallels with Glastonbury, the most notably associated Arthurian centre claimant. Somerset has a Wearyall Hill and Durham a Wearyall Bank, while the Headland area of Hartlepool is speculated as having been fabled Avalon.

Critics and cynics will baulk at many generalisations made throughout such as "historians all agree", "it is common knowledge", "it can be assumed" and the unspecified "written in ancient documents and records housed in the British Museum." Also his usage of the Malory family in the North-East as giving Arthur's "connection with our area a coherence it has never previously attained", and easy way in which any item of subterranea is associated with certainty to Arthur. To back this last claim he dwells at length on the significance and sacredness of caves and crypts throughout man's history. Its anecdotal nature and lack of referencing are serious flaws as far as academics are concerned, but I feel it is the general reader to whom this volume is addressed. As Reg makes clear: "Since this is an imaginative exercise which nobody will treat as authentic history, I have allowed myself to be governed by the rules of poetry." Other historians' rearranging of facts to fit pet theories and deliberate invention make his course an equally justifiable one.

Reg's net is cast wide in seeking evidence of Arthurian reality, from the note written by an illiterate farmworker of a vision he saw to alchemy and the archetypal psychological imagery of Carl Jung; from the importance and enigmas of intriguing house and

place names to tales of hobgoblins and knights transformed into chickens.

He also treats seriously the ley theory of straight tracks and sensibly reasons that impossible tunnel legends refer to overground pathways through dense forests.

The thesis grows more persuasive by its repetitiousness and even its frequent but honest vagueness. This jigsaw has many pieces misplaced and I suspect other seekers will follow to produce more missing parts. This is not a quest after fantasy but may well be the beginning of the creation of an even more substantial figure of Arthur as once and future King of Castle Eden.

Reg boldly proclaims the "mystic woodlands" encircling it make Castle Eden the unrivalled finest village in Britain and that his book attempts to capture that "elusive and unique atmosphere of this enchanted hamlet."

Yes, this book channels to the reader that magical quality of landscape, spirituality of special places and enduring truth of myth and legend.

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In "Black Hall Rocks and Blackhall in the parish of Monk Hesleden", Reg merely hinted at King Arthur's connection with Castle Eden. This limited edition, also published in 1985, is an overview of the location's traditions, beliefs, folklore, facts and memories. There are pictures and maps, a chronological chart of the major developments locally and a wealth of information collected before it was forever lost.

As Reg emphasizes, no one previously had bothered to set down the Blackhalls' past. Here is the prehistoric echo of the ley surveyors, the dodmen, remembered at Dead Man's Bank; is this the shore where Merlin found the babe Arthur cast ashore by a ninth wave; the Mickle Hill of dragon-slaying neo-pagan St Michael; many ghosts and tales of smuggling; of beacons and tunnels. A strong believer in the efficacy of legend, Reg relates the likely existence of the Pig and Whistle pub and its crine of passion; the grail at Castle Eden; the many Devil names attached to places; brownies, mermaids and black dogs as foundation sacrifices. There are descriptions of priests' hideaways, the eccentric geologist C.T. Trechmann, family trees, holy crosses and a beach streaker.

The reminiscences are particularly intriguing and in addition to a large gamut of folklore there are stories of boys' six hours exploring a tunnel, Jesus Christ appearing to cause a heavy drinker to restyle his life and bureaucratic vandalism when building Peterlee new town.

Sadly three local councils approached for help inproducing this local history were unhelpful -- though M.P. Jack Dorman, with whom Reg went to school, was encouraging. So Reg, also encouraged by local residents, decided to produce a photocopied edition.

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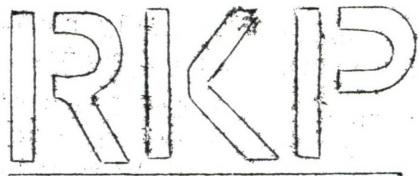
The prolific Reg has also produced this year "Black Hall Rocks (in verse) and Other Poems." His love of the village is neatly expressed in the title poem, mixing past and present, the enchantment and the mundanity ("Parish councillors are all talk ... But fail to mend a country walk..."). The love legend "To Ann of Black Hall Rocks" I dressed up in The Mail and gave it almost half a page with Reg's explanation and portrait. Other local landmarks and people featured include Pieroni's ice cream shop (where a neighbour took me for 99s more than 30 years ago), beach and coves, oysterboats and "Wisdom Smith"; and also more general topics from doorstep Bible-punchers and sunset at his home to funerals and Sunday dinner.

The style is simple yet evocative. It is the voice of experience and ranges over a wide spectrum of emotions. However, he is often witty and I particularly liked the tale of having been rescued by the law from a public lavatory.

Eight of the pieces are "lyrics waiting for music." Reg is a self-taught musician whose compositions include the theme music for ITV's dramatised version of A.J. Cronin's "The Stars Look Down."

His father was a miner, and born in Dawdon one year before World War I, Reg was brought up in a pit community environment. He composed "Big Meeting (Durham Miners' Gala)", the official music of all Durham coalfields' miners.

((continued in Page 8))



I have always held the publishing house of Routledge & Kegan Paul in his esteem. In fact upon submitting a book synopsis some years ago, I was optimistic enough to expect acceptance and to see myself eventually taking on the mantle of Tom Lethbridge.

T.C. Lethbridge seemed to produce a book a year for R.K.P. on whatever he pleased; full of ideas and insights. I rather hoped to step into his shoes. As it is, my history of ley hunting was published (in California of all places).

In the meantime, RKP has managed without me and a veritable avalanche of books has continued to be produced. However, it would have been good to see more original work in print and in particular British earth mysteries research and the continuum of earth mysteries, Forteana, paranormal, UFOs and folklore.

Nevertheless I will here wade into the backlog of review copies from RKP.

Last October, RKP launched a new imprint, Arkana, "devoted to books that contribute towards our understanding of ourselves and our place in the universe." The new imprint is designed to re-present major works of influence to a new generation at a reasonable price. The attractive covers with dark green background and eye-catching logo create a coherent identity.

So far ten books have appeared in the Arkana list.

G.I. Gurdjieff is represented by MEETINGS WITH REMARKABLE MEN, in which we meet unextraordinary people but ones with a strong desire to understand the world, while VIEWS FROM THE REAL WORLD presents a collection of talks where the author passes his wisdom on inner consciousness to his pupils. A pupil of that great spiritual master was P. D. Ouspensky and his huge tome A NEW MODEL OF THE UNIVERSE is made available. When I attempted to read it 20 years ago I was baffled and I'm still no wiser as it takes an encyclopedic journey through Christianity, yoga, tarot, fourth dimension, dreams, mysticism, and sex as stations on the evolutionary path to Superman.

THE BOOK OF THE DEAD and other works by E.A. Wallis Budge seem to be back in vogue so this paperback with introduction by David Lorimer will be welcomed. Belief in the immortality of the human soul was a fundamental Egyptian belief and Lorimer's introduction puts the book in perspective and explains its significance.

Also popular today is the oracle the I Ching and here we have Richard Wilhelm's translation in THE POCKET I CHING. Another celebrated book by Wilhelm is THE SECRET OF THE GOLDEN FLOWER, subtitled "A Chinese Book of Life", whose message is that understanding of the psyche is the ultimate human goal.

For those interested in the Sufi tradition, THE CONFERENCE OF THE BIRDS could be a starting point. It is an enchanting fable composed in the 12th century by a Persian poet, Farid ud-Din Attar. It is a spiritual quest work where the traveller is shown blockages along his path and how these may be overcome.

THE MAGICAL ARTS was first published in 1967, when there were many misconceptions about and its original title "The Black Arts" was itself a misnomer. With a title like that no wonder the public could not distinguish between paganism and Satanism, Doreen Valiente and Anton Le Vey! The book serves as an encyclopaedia of magic and the supernatural, covering such subjects as psychic attack, witchcraft, astrology, alchemy, fortune telling and so on. Richard Cavendish's book serves as a primer for the novice occultist.

Divining is another art increasingly popular these days and most will find with a little experience varying degrees of skill. The books of Tom Lethbridge and Tom Graves got me interested practically in the art of dowsing and THE POWER OF THE PENDULUM, by T.C. Lethbridge, is about his work with the pendulum and dreams. He gives rates -- or numbers -- to various aspects of life, and I recall on reading this slim volume for the first time that death and sleep were 40. Is this why we speak of having 40 winks or American judges have a penchant for sending miscreants down for 40 days? He concluded there are other realms of reality beyond our "normal" one and that the soul may well be immortal.

As for my plea that original work be produced we have one book just so. THE WESTERN WAY : A PRACTICAL GUIDE TO THE WESTERN MYSTERY TRADITION by Caitlin and John Matthews states that much work has been done in recent years by John Michell, Nigel Pennick, Paul Devereux and Paul Screeton ..."many acknowledge an inspirational quality in their work....." So far so good. Then come all the usual blunders. Alfred Watkins was hardly a "nineteenth century" antiquary for his ley theory came in the 1920s. He did not dub them "ley-lines" -- they were and are leys. Then we get the latest version of the alleged "visionary experience" where the old sites were "connected by shining paths, golden veins standing out amid the green and brown of the land. Such visionary glimpses, strongly akin to the analeptic thinking of the Foretime, are all part of the earth mysteries, and often come unbidden to transform the world about us." The historical research is nonsense so anyone following the meditative exercises should watch out. Definitely a bum trip. The idea behind it is sound enough, but it has too much of the airy-fairy hippie idealism to make it either coherent or convincing. If the authors had been more aware of current thinking on earth mysteries they would not have been so eager to look through rosy glasses. Our landscape is not always an idealistic place and I have serious misgivings about this work.

I hope that in future if Arkana wishes to publish new material its editors will contact authors with a proven record for factuality and not drop into a list of classics some poorly-researched scissors and paste hotch-potch with dangerous DIY mental exercises.

Now to the mainstream RKP output, but RESEARCHES ON THE I CHING cd just as well hv bn an Arkana book as it is marketed as a companion volume to Wilhelm's translation of the I Ching. It comprises Julian K. Shchutskii's valuable survey of the European, Chinese and Japanese translations and literature concerning the I Ching and his own critical introduction to it. He goes back to its origin and seeks to understand from the original text what the terms meant when first written.

I have no hesitation in fully recommending SORCERY by J. Finley Hurley, for it is a written by a professional psychologist who understands that reductionist scientific approaches cannot explain away all that is scrcery. He deals with it as a rational fact of life which cannot be simply explained away. The "evil eye" is seen as real, whether the victim believes or disbelieves it. His modernness included the effects of dancing in a disco, and I can state from recent personal experience that loud noise and flasing lights caused me to totally dissociate. The modern perspective is carefully thought out and backed by case histories and experiments. A valuable addition to any serious reader's library.

RKP also distributes Shambhala Publications' books and two submitted for review are: EARTH ASCENDING by Jose Arguelles, which appears at first to be mass of diagrams no one could understand but with some patience and reading link to show how many systems of life have correspondences and that inevitably all the many are just parts of formative structures in the evolution of the universe. And STAYING ALIVE: THE PSYCHOLOGY OF HUMAN SURVIVAL, by Roger Walsh. This is suspiciously like a preaching to the converted nuclear family homily. A doctor playing Patience Strong. It advocates all the usual New Age thinking being shared to create positive "global psychology". I heartily endorse the sentiments but it is just another pie in the sky manifesto.

On a more serious level is THE RAIMENT OF LIGHT: A STUDY OF THE HUMAN AURA by David Tansley. It proclaims a foreword by Michael Bentine -- which is 11 lines long! -- but Tansley does not need such endorsement. His pioneering work with black boxes had me definitely on his side in the very early Seventies and he is one of the paranormalist writers I have regarded as genuinely sincere while others have fallen by the wayside. Shamanism, subtle bodies, auras, dowsing, healing, and more is contained in a compact and clearly defined book. Thoroughly recommended.

Lastly, WOMEN OF WISDOM by Tsultrim Allione, stories and guides for the unfolding spirituality of women by a former Buddhist nun. Women of all ages who are working on their own transformation will find much to inspire and strengthen them here. These are sacred biographies which show feminine spirituality reconsidered. (I hope next issue to deal in greater depth with two books by Lynn V. Andrews).

** Prices and a full catalogue of RKP books is available from Routledge & Kegan Paul plc., 14 Leicester Square, London WC2H 7PH.

A military march dedicated to H.M.S. Warrior, the world's first iron-clad battleship berthed in Hartlepool, received its world premier before the Duke of Edinburgh when he visited the vessel in 1980. The music is on record backed by a Christmas number performed by pupils of Hartlepool's Lynnfield Primary School. Another premier was of a piano concerto performed in the presence of Miss Friedeland Wagner, granddaughter of the famous composer.

A record of a different sort claimed by Reg is a marathon 1,287 miles trip in one day on British Rail -- for £3 on a pensioners' pass.

This lively septuagenarian still finds the days too short to do all he would like. He and his wife Doris enjoy a large garden at their former coastguard house overlooking the North Sea and 15 minutes from the beach.

His first book was "a sort of pensioner's philosophical jottings", as Reg puts it, published recently, all followed by the three further volumes in 1985. Writing poetry is his favourite pastime.

It is the Reg Wrights of this world, of whom there are too few, who are needed in communities. Reg has fulfilled the role of chronicler as historian and bard, sensitive to the metaphysical realms of the past and legend, but also the changing fortunes as the pit has closed, the coalfield contracts and the old folk with the lore pass on.

***** "Black Hall Rocks and Blackhall" has a cover price of £5-50; "Black Hall Rocks and Other Poems" £2-50; and "A History of Castle Eden Lore" unknown. For full price details and postage, inquiries to Reg Wright, Pilmore House, Coast Road, Blackhall Rocks, Hartlepool, Cleveland, TS27 4AY.

READERS' LETTERS

From S. Gray-Thompson. "A few comments on "black panthers." Your quote for The Sun, 15 Dec. 77 must be a mistake unless there is a Bettyhill in Northumberland. Bettyhill is a settlement in North Sutherland about 25 miles north of my place and although in 1977 I was resident in Shetland at the time....torn carcasses of sheep in the Bettyhill area about that time. Northern Times, the local paper at Golspie, would have a record..

"On April 6, last Saturday, the Aberdeen paper The Press and Journal had a news item of two "big cat" sightings in South Sutherland. Both sightings by police drivers on patrol. Larger than a wild cat and crossing road. Two incidents about ten miles apart." He also speculates on driving causing a trance state and the shaman seeing animals in the north -- direction of wisdom -- when in a sweat lodge. Also that Caithness, adjoining Sutherland, is supposed to mean Ness (or headland) of the Cat Men. He also draws attention to the number of UFO sightings made from cars.

Paul Screeton replies: The Sun cutting definitely states Bettyhill, North Sunderland, Northumberland. The 1:50 000 map sheet 75 has North Sunderland but no Bettyhill. North Sunderland is close by the sea like the Scottish Bettyhill.

I stand by my panther sighting but wonder if some others are mis-sightings. I ask this as on August 22 this year I was photographing coal trains near my home. I was at Greatham station when I saw a large animal briefly at the end of the northbound platform. It looked in the split seconds like a lioness. After the shock I cycled to investigate but the beast had vanished. When a man appeared at the stables opposite where I viewed it I asked if the dwelling had a labrador. They did not. So I ventured my lioness suspicion. He then pointed out that what I must have seen was the sandy Alsation which was off its lead -- old, timid but might bark. Mystery solved.

Additionally I saw a brown stoat at Greatham. The next day at Seaton Carew station I saw a 100 per cent snowy white creature. Stoats can become ermine in winter on high ground. But this looked thin enough to be a weasel and showed inquisitiveness by coming close, though it did not show a weasel's agility when falling off a low paving stone. So was it an escaped albino ferret? Curiously I normally carry a camera -- but not on this occasion.

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ANCIENT SKILLS & WISDOM REVIEW SECTION NUMBER 28

"LABYRINTHS -- THEIR GEOMANCY AND SYMBOLISM" (£1-20); "PAGAN PROPHECY AND PLAY" (£1); "THE COSMIC AXIS" (£1). All by NIGEL PENNICK (of 142 Pheasant Rise, Bar Hill, Cambridge, CB3 8SD. Uncrossed cheques/P0s made payable to N. Pennick. Add 20p postage for one, 25p for 3 or 50p up to 8. For U.S. in dollar bills. S.A.E. for full list.

My children play hopscotch in our driveway and this is about as near as most people get to participating in the fascinating subject of labyrinths. The booklet "Labyrinths" explains underlying mystic principles; symbolic layout; how to draw and lay out such and their geometrical properties; relationship to board and children's games; connections with numerology and Qabalah; labyrinths of pagan, Roman and Christian times. Inspiring and illustrated. Puts the old art in modern perspective.

"Pagan Prophecy and Play in Northern Europe" also covers board games and divination in a living continuity. During my editorship of "The Ley Hunter" there was interest in articles on Nine Men's Morris and this and many other games are described and explained, revealing their symbolism and spiritual uses, numerology, mystic traditions and other exoteric and esoteric uses. They are a living part of our heritage and this publication gives full rules so the reader can play them.

"The Cosmic Axis" has come down to us in the traditions of the Elder Faith in Northern Europe and is shown physically in the geomantic layout of the countryside and particularly where earth energy is bound and immobilised, as in the legends of dragon-slaying. The cosmic axis explains certain concepts of the Elder Faith symbolically, but is also a manifestation of the shamans' psychic experiences and those who have had near death experiences. There is a section on crossroads, crosses, sacred trees, maypoles, broomsticks and showground ritual (was merry-go-round rotation merely axis coincidence?). He ends with turf mazes, which takes us full circle to the first of this trio of booklets.

N.P. also began NEW ALBION NEWSLETTER, an information bulletin commenting on the current European and world pagan scene and documenting excesses of fundamentalism. SAE + 17p stamp for inland; 2 IRCs for overseas. No.1. Christian imbalance in the media -- particularly radio. No. 2. Announces forthcoming PRACTICAL GEOMANCY. Further details of new mag by sending SAE.

(** Stop Press: Two further Runestaff booklets have been published. "SKYLORE OF THE NORTH", by O.S. Reuter, has been serialised in "Stonehenge Viewpoint", and is a translation of the work of a German expert in astronomy and calendars. Of practical value to any pagan or geomant. Also "RUNESTAVES AND OGHAMS", by Nigel Pennick, a revised and updated edition of the author's 1979 work. It deals with the earliest-known ancient phonetic scripts of Northern Europe. It contains all known staves from the Runic system of writing, varied systems of the Celtic oghams, and many connections between the two. Prices unknown.

"FENG-SHUI" by E.J. Eitel (Synergetic Press, 24 Old Gloucester Road, London WC1. Price unknown).

Eitel's book originally appeared in 1873, wherein the Christian missionary puzzled over the geomantic system which claimed to harmonise planetary currents and human habitations and personal wellbeing. His Western prejudices are evident, but nevertheless this is a classic account of the Chinese system. The subject has been so popular that this is the third modern edition, complete with delightfully full-page illustrations from an 1843 book. Particularly useful are the new foreword and lengthy afterword by earth mysteries luminary John Michell. Eitel never fully understood feng-shui, but Michell suggests it can be summed up as: "The art of perceiving the subtle energies that animate nature and the landscape, and the science of reconciling the best interests of the living earth with those of all its inhabitants." Invaluable insight into the Chinese system of geomancy.

"THE DRAGON OF CHRISTCHURCH & OTHER WONDERS SEEN ON A JOURNEY THROUGH THE WEST OF ENGLAND IN 1113" (Price unknown. From J. Harte, 35a West Street, Abbotsbury, near Weymouth, Dorset).

Jeremy Harte has translated Hermann of Lao's "Miracles of Our Lady" and it superbly evokes a cleric and his fellows' fund-raising trip in England. Harte discusses many

miracles described, of people cured by relics dipped in holy water, and speculates on the influence of popular expectation working these "miracles." One is rather different, however, for after healing a cripple at Totnes, Devon (where incidentally I proposed marriage to my wife), a man who commits sacrilege by stealing cash gifts is quickly found to commit suicide.

The latter part of this slim booklet deals with medieval accounts of drafons -- in the context of the one described at Christchurch -- and Harte adequately draws the conclusion that what was being described were varieties of meteorological phenomena; particularly ball lightning.

This is the first occasional paper of the South-Western Antiquarian Society and hopefully is the precursor of many more.

"THE GREAT SEA-SERPENT CONTROVERSY : A CULTURAL STUDY", by PAUL LESTER. (Protean Publications, Flat 4, 34 Summerfield Crescent, Edgbaston, Birmingham, B16 0ER. Price 60p + 13p stamp postage).

At the time of reading this booklet -- basically an extract from a PhD thesis -- a harrowing inquest was being held into a group of children who perished in the waves at Land's End. The pupils' headmaster, either horrendously unfeelingly or maybe even outspokenly truthfully suggested the deaths were fate and the will of the sea.

This book is not about insensitive, or psychically sensitive, educationists, but the lore of sailors and fishermen. It is about an awe of the unknown depths and what placatory means are needed to make safer the lives of those in peril on the sea. The rituals attached to seamanship and omens of fortune and ill-luck. In particular the role played by sea serpents. Here, as elsewhere, witness testimony and "occupational folklore" finds itself in deep waters with the academic establishment. Regarding the kraken, mermaids and quasi-saurians, men of reputation are in the business to throw the baby out with the oceans of bathwater.

Paul Lester wades in with his own opinions after discussing folklore, sea serpents of the last century, modern times, their treatment by scientists and a comparative study of oceanic cosmopolitanism and Loch Ness parochialism. He concludes that monsters of the waters are part of a larger modern myth of unknown phenomena representing "pre-eminently the realm of prehistory."

Hopefully the author's promise of a fuller analysis of this argument will culminate in publication.

"SKYWAYS AND LANDMARKS REVISITED" by PHILIP HESELTON, JIMMY GODDARD and PAUL BAINES. (Price £1 + 18p postage. From P. Heselton, 170 Victoria Avenue, Hull, HU5 3DY).

Subtitled "A re-evaluation of Tony Wedd's work on leys and flying saucers", it is the joint production of the Northern Earth Mysteries Group and Surrey Earth Mysteries Group.

Wedd's slim original booklet of 1961 brought together two subjects previously mutually unconnected. Many Eighties readers familiar with Paul Devereux's earth lights theory will therefore be surprised that such a link was posited a quarter of a century ago between the prehistoric landscape and lights in the sky. Consequently this work's reassessment is timely. The new edition is broadened by such additional examinations as a fieldwork survey into the alignments, mostly using only tree clumps. Though not particularly convincing original markers to the general ley hunter, Heselton argues strongly for the continuity of special clumps and their maximum visibility factor, with the accuracy of alignment checked by computer programme by which is concluded that "the basic alignment system holds up well."

The authors tackle the contentious aspect whereby the claim for 12 healing lines was received by revelation from a sensitive, Mary Long, channelled it is claimed from Space People. In today's ufological climate this is a brave angle to reassert. Goddard's history of the leys and ufology interface is followed by Heselton's historical perspective, which explains how and why Wedd's conclusions were reached. However, the new survey and Baines' observations and Heselton's speculations on trees are equally absorbing, as are other "appendices." As for the final conclusion, this will doubtless irk or wryly amuse most of the ufological fraternity, split fairly evenly as they are today between those presuming a psychosociological reference and those with a geophysical framework. Heselton submits: "The significance of these lines, that they were found initially following a communication from extraterrestrial sources, should not be overlooked."

(Longer review/article by Screeton in next NORTHERN EARTH MYSTERIES)

"THE KNIGHTS OF DANBURY" by ANDREW COLLINS (From Earthquest Books, 19 St Davids Way, Wickford, Essex, SS11 8EX. £2-20 inc. postage).

What was the identity of the "picked knight" in the church at Danbury? Here is another "psychic quest" in the tradition of Andy's previous books, "The Sword and the Stone" and "The Running Well Mystery". This time the mystery surrounds the St Clere (Sinclair) family of Danbury, Essex, a village which Andy concludes was once a place of sun worship and midsummer celebrations and that the knights perpetuated old traditions. A key part of the enigma is revealed to fellow researcher Bernard Gowing in a visionary dream and later confirmed.

Here are devil legends and strong pagan connections; an embalmed knight and the riddle of the wooden knights within the church; and the mysterious lords of the manor and their complete history, both nationally and locally. The book also gives an account of Danbury's remarkable history and features a delightful pictorial review of the village in the past.

The book is superbly produced and will appeal to a wide audience, from local residents to earth mysteries students, pagans and occultists. Grand original research and an inspiration to all.

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THE LEY HUNTER. Senior E.M. mag, dealing with ancient alignments in Britain and elsewhere, and all aspects of geomancy, folklore, prehistoric sites, strange phenomena and anomalous earth energies. No. 97. Delayed issue but with bonus of a supplement edited by Brian Larkman. The main issue follows The Shaman (issues 4 & 5) in looking critically at Williamson and Bellamy's deplorable "Ley Lines in Question" diatribe book. Back to basics, etymologist Angus McGeoch takes a fresh look at "toot" ancient mound names; George Sandwith gives a gory account of African shamanism; and there is an earth lights case of The Linley Lights as "counselling" for sceptics. Among the columnists Paul Screeton analyses what the discovery of alignments in the U.S. means; John Glover on "The Jupiter Effect"; and Sig Lonegren on two types of dowsing. Perceptive and provocative book reviews section. Readers' letters. **SUPPLEMENT:** A common strand links articles on such subjects as visualisation, rod dowsing, "whole body" dowsing, acupuncture, "tuning in" to ancient sites, moment of birth significance, spiritual journeying, terrestrial zodiacs, paganism, Dartmoor wandering and visionary discovery. No. 98. There is an exciting piece on radiation at Rollright (including brine shrimps' reaction) and an endpiece on a well-researched New Jersey "spooklight" to again add weight to the earth lights hypothesis. A study of Alfred Watkins by editor Paul Devereux reveals new facets of the man not revealed in his son's biography. Nigel Pennick rightly trashes claims of "planetary gridsters." Descriptive pieces on places and sites appear from Dave and Lynn Patrick (Arran) and Cheryl Garside goes "Ley Hunting on Dartmoor." An innovation is abstracts of recent exchange magazines. Annual summer-to-summer sub (3 issues + supplement): U.K. £4; U.S. 15 dollars surface, 20 air. From P.O. Box 13, Welshpool, Powys, Wales.

NORTHERN EARTH MYSTERIES. Journal of the Northern Earth Mysteries Group. Varied, interesting and lively. E.M. mag of more than just interest to northerners. They also hold regular meetings. No. 27. Editor Philip Heselton has become greatly interested in astrology and here gives an astrological analysis of Aquarian pioneer and ley rediscoverer Alfred Watkins. Ian Taylor describes his Underwood-type dowsing investigations at St Martin's, Wharram Percy, and suggests the pattern on an incised stone may be a crude simplified plan. Jimmy Goddard describes some Norfolk leys. Plus reviews, letters, miscellany and exchange publications. No. 28. Philip Heselton rightly introduces the three articles in this issue by noting sagely "that everywhere is of significance, if we can but tune in to its distinctive character." These are pieces on small local sites of seeming on the surface little interest. "A Walk in the Fylde" has Jimmy Goddard proving that a few hours walking in unpromising countryside can reveal much to the perceptive ley hunter. Paul Screeton unearths many odd tales regarding Seaton Carew's churchyard, mostly tidbits from conversations with friends. Ian P. Taylor finds alignments at Pocklington and a lost chapel. To celebrate 20 years of the existence of THE LEY HUNTER there is a facsimile copy of the very first modest issue

of what has become E.M.'s flagship. SUB: £3 for 6 issues; £1-50 for three. Cheques and P.O. s should be made payable to P. Heselton, of 170 Victoria Avenue, Hull, HU5 3DY.

QUEST. Western mystery tradition mag with articles by living writers. Q. Also Quest team are active in several projects (full details in mag). No. 60. Articles cover such subjects as tides of the year and how people can utilise these magically; a neophyte's inspiration at Castlerigg stone circle; an overview of approaches to mythology; walking the supposed maze on Glastonbury Tor; the necessary rigours of magical questing; invocation by means of runes; and god and goddess consciousness in the modern day. No. 61. Most interesting piece is on a Yorkshire "folly" of circa 1820 and current usage (also I have grave suspicions that such features were only created to "alleviate unemployment"). No. 62. Louise Hodgson's "Shamanic Site Work" is full of good sense and of particular interest to E.M. researchers. No. 63. A great emphasis in several articles on helping oneself either individually or in groups. From BCM -- S C L Quest, London WC1N 3XX. Sub £3-50; U.S. 10 dollars (15 airmail). Payment by crossed cheques/P.O.s to Quest.

NORTHERN UFO NEWS. Bi-monthly NUFON publication covering various aspects of ufology. No. 109. Editor Jenny Randles on H.T.V. pilot programme on paranormal. Media matters looks at two fatal air crashes the same day over East Anglia plus other items relating to ufology in print. Plus news round-up; articles elsewhere; books seen; investigations, including a confused but intriguing one involving an object near Snowdon and visit/s? to RAF Valley, though having as many holes as a colander appears to have held some lettuce. No. 110. Editorial on the Rendlesham Forest case gives a premature knighthood to Michael Heseltine, but J.R.'s seeming cover-up and troubles over "Sky Crash" may be unjustifiable paranoia (and Ridpath probably caused media reticence). Usual features plus NUFON conference report. No. 111. Editorial on "chosen" children. J. & C. Bord briefly on pulsed light-tracks (a photographic gimmick); mystery "UFO nest" circles. No. 112. Editorial explains the BUFORA National Investigations Committee and its AIs (accredited investigators); John Grant's "Dreamers" book reviewed; media matters (inc. yours truly); brief modern cases plus ones from 1956 and 1964 and a possible 1983 abduction. Also Rendlesham Forest updates. No. 113. Editorial on cover-ups in the wake of publication by Clive Ponting and his trial. Paul Devereux clears up a few "earth lights" points. Extremely intriguing Lincolnshire coast sighting of 1984 and one from the Fifties by a RAF officer on an experimental flight. No. 114. J.R. considers and invites comment on the desirability or otherwise of proper classification and definition of UFOs. Interesting Todmorden outskirts case by dubious witness and real "Billy Liar" case from Sussex. Sub for 1985 issues £5-40. From Jenny Randles, 8 Whitethroat Walk, Birchwood, Warrington, Cheshire, WA3 6PQ.

EARTHQUEST NEWS. A5 format journal covering psychometry, questing and the psychic side of E.M. Essex orientated. 3--40pp. Sub £3-80 for 4 issues, from Earthquest News, 19 St Davids Way, Wickford, Essex, SS1 8EX. No. 12. Subtitled "A Healthy Alternative to Reality", I enjoyed best "The Doc Shiels Phenomenon", editor Andy Collins' report , on the man who claims to raise monsters, and Doc's own account of Monstermind '83. Collins describes an excellent psychic drama enacted on Menorca. Plus Tony Roberts on the battle for Park Wood in the Glastonbury Zodiac. No. 13. More good personal investigations: here being a Goffs Oak, Essex, mystery big cat; a preserved guardian dog discovered in a Leigh, Essex, pub; a grotesque "Satanic" birdman at Stumps Cross, Leics.; and named elms of Essex; plus Park Wood update and plenty of "Devil Talk" miscellany.